



## A BRIEF GUIDE TO PROMOTING COMMUNITY-BASED SHARPS COLLECTIONS

### I. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

There are many individuals with serious health conditions who manage their care at home and use syringes, needles, and other “sharps”. For example, people with diabetes inject their own insulin and use lancets every day to test their blood glucose and other injection drug users use syringes and needles to administer their medication.

Safe disposal of sharps is critically important to optimize health, safety and to protect the environment. The best way to ensure that people are protected from potential injury or disease transmission of blood borne diseases due to needle sticks is to follow established guidelines for the proper containment and disposal of sharps, including, syringes, needles and lancets

### II. RESOURCES FOR INFORMATION

The Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) promotes the establishment and administration of voluntary sharps collection programs for communities. There are many such programs across Michigan that provide this important service to their counties or communities, and a listing of available programs can be found on the Medical Waste Regulatory Program Web site at [www.michigan.gov/deqmedwaste](http://www.michigan.gov/deqmedwaste). If you are interested in starting a program in your community, you may contact the DEQ, Medical Waste Regulatory Program, Andrew Shannon, at 517-230-9800 or via email at [shannona1@michigan.gov](mailto:shannona1@michigan.gov) for recommendations and additional information. The DEQ also recommends contacting an existing program for information on how they administer it, procedures they follow, and any special requirements they have. There are other documents on the Web site you may find useful in distributing or using as guidance or outreach tools that address the dangers of sharps in the regular trash or recycling.

### III. OUTREACH AND PROMOTION OF NEW PROGRAMS

A good place to start is by contacting local health departments, hospitals, nursing homes, pharmacies, health clinics, community-based organizations, mobile van programs, public transportation facilities, housing projects, police stations, waste transfer stations and other venues by phone or mail correspondence to ask if they might want to participate. is.

These types of facilities have become settings in many communities for safe sharps disposal and some even choose to offer syringe collection drop boxes (or "kiosks") to help facilitate the safe collection of used sharps.

When attempting to recruit a volunteer location, it is a good idea to briefly explain the issue and importance of such programs in protecting public health and the environment; explain the need for such a program, especially if no program exists in the area; and to let them know that the DEQ is an advocate for these programs and can help with any questions they have. You can refer them to the DEQ contact information listed above.

A sample letter template is included on the following page for your use. Please refer any questions or concerns to the DEQ as indicated above.

## **SAMPLE LETTER TEMPLATE**

TO: [FACILITY OR ORGANIZATION NAME]

FROM: [NAME]

DATE: [DATE]

SUBJECT: Request for Volunteer Participation as a Residential Sharps Collection Site

The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that there are approximately 8 million individuals in the United States that must administer injections in the home, primarily diabetics, producing approximately 3 billion sharps (needles, lancets, etc.) per year.

Even if placed in puncture-resistant containers and disposed of with general household waste, household generated waste is often compacted, causing sharps to be released from the containers and exposing waste handlers and landfill workers to untreated sharps. Untreated needles can result in waste handlers being exposed to diseases such as HIV, Hepatitis B, and Hepatitis C. Loose needles in household generated waste can also be a hazard to children, pets, and the environment in general.

As such, we are asking for your help to help keep household generated sharps out of the waste stream in [COUNTY OR COMMUNITY NAME].

Numerous facilities in Michigan currently accept properly contained sharps from area residents. Some of these facilities even provide residents with a small sharps container, either free of charge or at a nominal fee, and/or accept the containers for proper disposal when full. This is a valuable service to the community and a good public relations tool for your [FACILITY NAME/ORGANIZATION].

**If your [FACILITY/ORGANIZATION] would be willing and able to accept used needles/sharps containers from community residents in [COUNTY OR COMMUNITY NAME], or if you have any questions, please contact [CONTACT NAME/PHONE/EMAIL].**

Thank you in advance for your consideration and commitment to the safety of Michigan's residents.

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